

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 8

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response amends claims 1, 2, 10, 16 and 19. Claims 1-20 are pending in this application.

I. 35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

A. Baltes

The Action rejects claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by EP Patent No. 0297684 A1 to Baltes. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections and asks that they be withdrawn.

Independent claims 1 and 2 have been amended to recite an apparatus that includes an energy source wherein the energy source is capable of transferring heat to the textile face of a floorcovering in an amount sufficient to melt a portion of the textile face and thereby alter the appearance of the textile face of the floorcovering. Use of the apparatus results in melting portions of the textile face of the floorcovering which in turn results in the appearance of grouted lines on the floorcovering. Thus, the apparatus can be used to impart a grouted appearance to the floorcovering. Applicant respectfully asserts that the limitation that the energy source be capable of transferring a sufficient amount of heat to melt the textile face is a structural limitation of the apparatus which overcomes the Action's rejection to the previous "adapted to" language.

Baltes discloses a tool for forming grooves in elastic floor covering material, such as linoleum or PVC, so that a welding wire can be run in the groove. The tool includes a gouge 4 (fixed in movable carrier 1) that penetrates the floor covering material and cuts a groove from the

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 9

material as the carrier is moved along the floor. Baltes discloses a heating apparatus 10 provided on the carrier 1 that is used to soften the floor covering material so that the gouge 4 can more easily cut through the floor covering material.

Baltes fails to teach an energy source that is capable of transferring heat to a surface (much less a textile face surface) in an amount sufficient to alter the appearance of the surface. Rather, Baltes only teaches a hot-air apparatus 10, such as “a commercially obtainable hair dryer” (col. 2, lines 3-5) that is used to soften elastic material to facilitate cutting by the gouge. While apparatus 10 may soften the elastic floor, it does not, in and of itself, alter the appearance of the elastic flooring surface. Rather, the elastic floor after heating, while a bit softer, still appears the same.

Moreover, there is no teaching or suggestion in Baltes that apparatus 10 would function successfully to alter the appearance of a textile face floorcovering. Rather, apparatus 10 is meant only to soften an elastic floor. Baltes discloses use of a commercial hairdryer (which does not exude much heat) and makes clear that a thermostat can be used to avoid overheating. Col. 2, lines 10-12. Thus, while apparatus 10 does exude heat, it is only enough to soften elastic flooring. Baltes even cautions against applying too much heat. Nothing in Baltes demonstrates to one of skill in the art that its device would serve to alter the appearance of a textile face without undue experimentation. For at least these reasons, Baltes thus fails to anticipate or render obvious amended claims 1 and 2, as well as claims 3 and 4 that depend from claim 2.

Moreover, Baltes is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that its device is suited or adapted for use on textile face floorcovering. Rather, Baltes only discloses use of its device on

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 10

elastic (PVC or linoleum) flooring surfaces. Baltes fails to anticipate claims 1 and 2 for at least this reason.

Nor would it be obvious to one of skill in the art to use the Baltes device on a textile face flooring surface. To begin, Baltes in nonanalogous art. As explained above, Baltes is directed to carving grooves into elastic flooring so that a wire can be inserted in the groove. Baltes is totally unrelated to installation of textile face floorcovering and alteration of the appearance of textile face floorcovering. Thus, one of skill in the art desiring to install carpet textile floorcovering would not know or be motivated to look in the wire installation art.

Further, the subject matter recited in claims 1 and 2 is not directed to carving grooves in the textile face of the floorcovering, only melting portions of the textile face to impart a grouted appearance to the floorcovering. Thus, no motivation exists to use the Baltes device (which carves grooves) on such textile face surfaces. Moreover, even assuming, *arguendo*, that such motivation existed, the elastic surfaces for which the Baltes device is intended for use are relatively smooth and thus the surfaces provide little resistance to movement of the gouge. In contrast, textile face surfaces are relatively rough and thus the fibers would resist movement of the gouge across those surfaces, resulting in tearing and damage to the fiber face. Thus, the Baltes tool would never be used on textile face floorcovering because doing so would ruin the textile face surfaces. For at least these reasons, Baltes fails to render obvious claims 1 and 2 and these claims are allowable.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 11

B. Hubbard

The Action rejects claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,935,357 to Hubbard et al. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections and asks that they be withdrawn.

Independent claims 1, 2, and 10 have been amended to recite an apparatus that includes an energy source (claims 1 and 2) or hot air gun (claim 10) wherein the energy source is capable of transferring heat to the textile face of a floorcovering in an amount sufficient to melt a portion of the textile face and thereby alter the appearance of the textile face of the floorcovering. Use of the apparatus results in melting portions of the textile face of the floorcovering which in turn results in the appearance of grouted lines on the floorcovering. Thus, the apparatus can be used to impart a grouted appearance to the floorcovering. Applicant respectfully asserts that the limitation that the energy source (claims 1 and 2) or hot air gun (claim 10) be capable of transferring a sufficient amount of heat to melt the textile face is a structural limitation of the apparatus which overcomes the Action's rejection to the previous "adapted to" language.

Hubbard discloses a welding tool, that includes hot air welder 20, for welding together polymeric roofing membranes. Hubbard is devoid of any teaching or suggestion that its device is suited or adapted for use on textile face floorcovering. Rather, Hubbard only discloses use of its device on polymeric roofing membranes. Hubbard fails to anticipate claims 1, 2, and 10 for at least this reason.

Hubbard fails to teach an energy source that is capable of transferring heat to a surface (much less a textile face surface) in an amount sufficient to alter the appearance of the surface. Rather, Hubbard teaches heat sealing two membranes 12, 14, one overlapping the other. As

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 12

shown in Figure 19, nozzle 40 of the hot air welder 20 is inserted between the membranes 12, 14 at the overlap to weld the two membranes together (the top of membrane 12 is welded to the bottom of membrane 14). Any melting that is occurring is between the membranes 12 and 14, and therefore, the Hubbard does not teach an apparatus for altering the appearance of the roofing membranes. Rather, the roofing membranes appear the same after welding.

Further, there is no teaching or suggestion in Hubbard that hot air welder 20 would function successfully to alter the appearance of a textile face floorcovering. Rather, welder 20 is shown only as welding plastic roofing membranes together. Thus, while welder 20 does exude heat, nothing in Hubbard demonstrates to one of skill in the art that its device could successfully alter the appearance of a textile face without undue experimentation. For these additional reasons, Hubbard fails to anticipate or render obvious claims 1, 2, and 10, and these claims are allowable, as are claims 3-9 and 15 and claims 11-14, which ultimately depend from allowable claims 2 and 10, respectively.

Moreover, claim 8 recites an adjustable frame to vary the position of the heat source relative to the floor covering. Hubbard fails to disclose a frame that allows adjustment of the position of the heat source relative to the roofing membrane. In Hubbard, the hot air welder 20 is mounted on chassis 22. However, Hubbard provides no means for adjusting the position of the chassis 22 to reposition the hot air welder 20 closer to, or further from, the underlying roofing membranes. Nothing in Hubbard teaches or suggests varying the position of the hot air welder relative to the roofing membrane. Claim 8 is allowable for this additional reason.

Claim 9 recites a heat source holder adjustably attached to a frame stanchion so that the holder (to which the heat source is attached) can be positioned in a plurality of distances from the

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 13

floor covering. As explained above, nothing in Hubbard teaches or suggests a structure to which the heat source is attached that can be positioned a plurality of distances from the floor covering and thereby adjust the position of the heat source relative to the floor covering. Claim 9 is allowable for this additional reason. Similarly, claim 10 recites an apparatus whereby the distance of the hot air gun from the textile face of the floor covering is adjustable and is allowable for this additional reason as well.

Nor would it be obvious to one of skill in the art to use the Hubbard device on a textile face flooring surface. To begin, Hubbard in nonanalogous art. As explained above, Hubbard is directed to welding roofing membranes and totally unrelated to installation of textile face floorcovering and alteration of the appearance of textile face floorcovering. Thus, one of skill in the art desiring to install carpet textile floorcovering would not know or be motivated to look to roof membrane welding technology for guidance.

II. 35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

The Action rejects claims 16-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent XP002137953 (JP 59155218A) in view of EP Patent No. 0297684 A1 to Baltes. Applicant's Assignee respectfully traverses these rejections and asks that they be withdrawn.

Independent claims 16 and 19 have been amended to recite a method that includes positioning adjacent a textile face floorcovering a hot air gun wherein the hot air gun is capable of transferring heat to the textile face of the floorcovering in an amount sufficient to melt a portion of the textile face and thereby change the appearance of the textile face of the floorcovering and moving this gun across the textile face of the floorcovering. The Action

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 14

acknowledges that the Japanese reference fails to teach the recited hot air gun, but relies upon the teachings of Baltes to supply this missing element. Action, ¶ 6. Neither the Japanese reference nor Baltes, however, teaches a heat source or hot air gun capable of transferring heat in an amount sufficient to melt a textile face.

Baltes discloses a tool for forming grooves in elastic floor covering material, such as linoleum or PVC, so that a welding wire can be run in the groove. Such a reference is simply not an analogous field of art to altering the appearance of textile face floorcoverings. The standard for determining whether a reference is analogous is whether the art is “reasonably pertinent to the problem with which the inventor is concerned.” *In re Gorman*, 933 F.2d 982, 986 (Fed. Cir. 1991). *See also In re Deminski*, 796 F.2d 436, 441-42 (Fed. Cir. 1986). Wire installation in linoleum floors technology is unrelated to the problems involved in installing and altering the appearance of textile face floorcovering. Therefore, it would not have been obvious for someone addressing textile face floorcovering installation and appearance alteration to have consulted technology related to wire installation in linoleum floors.

Moreover, “[w]hen it is necessary to select elements of various teachings in order to form the claimed invention, [one must] ascertain whether there is any suggestion or motivation in the prior art to make the selection made by the applicant.” *In re Gorman*, 933 F.2d at 986. If no teaching or suggestion of the combination exists in the references, such a combination is not obvious. As explained *supra* Part I.A, Baltes fails to teach or suggest use of its device on textile face floorcoverings nor would such use be obvious given that it could be damaging to the textile face. Thus, no motivation exists to combine the teachings of Baltes with the Japanese reference.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 15

Furthermore, a prima facie case of obviousness requires that the prior art references teach or suggest all of the claim limitations. As explained above, Baltes does not teach or suggest a hot air gun capable of transferring heat to the textile face of the floorcovering in an amount sufficient to melt a portion of the textile face and thereby change the appearance of the textile face of the floorcovering, as recited in claims 16 and 19. Thus, combination of Baltes and the Japanese reference (which Applicant's Assignee believes improper) fails to result in the subject matter recited in these claims and thus fails to render claims 16 and 19 obvious. Claims 16 and 19 are therefore allowable, as are claims 17-18 and 20, which ultimately depend from allowable claims 16 and 19, respectively.

AMENDMENT AND RESPONSE TO OFFICE ACTION

Applicant: William G. Noles

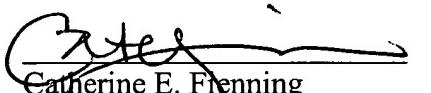
U.S. Patent Application No. 09/766,754

Page 17

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-20 are in condition for immediate allowance, and request early notification to that effect. If any issues remain to be resolved, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at 404.815.6389.

Respectfully submitted,


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